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**CLAIMS:**

What is claimed is:

- 5 1. A method for correcting a path sequence of an environment variable in a data processing system, the method comprising:
- monitoring the data processing system for a change effecting the environment variable; and
- 10 responsive to detection of the change effecting the environment variable, altering the environment variable to ensure that a proper file is found and used when selected by one of a user and a running application program.
- 15 2. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the change is a change effecting the path sequence of the environment variable.
- 20 3. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the change is a deletion of a directory from the data processing system.
4. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the change
- 25 is the installation of a software application onto the data processing system.
5. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the change is the modification of the contents of the environment
- 30 variable.
6. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the step

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of altering the environment variable comprises removing references to all but one of duplicate files in the path sequence of the environment variable.

5 7. The method as recited in claim 6, wherein the all but one duplicate file is selected by a user.

8. A method for modifying at least one of a plurality of environmental variables to ensure a more efficient  
10 operation of a data processing system; the method comprising:

detecting the deletion of a directory from the data processing system;

determining whether any of the plurality of  
15 environment variables contain a reference to the directory; and

responsive to a determination that at least one of the plurality of environment variables contains a reference to the directory, removing the reference to the  
20 directory in effected ones of the plurality of environment variables.

9. A method for correcting modifications to an environment variable in a data processing system, the  
25 method comprising:

detecting that an environment variable has been modified;

responsive to a determination that duplicate files exist in a path sequence of the environment variable,  
30 prompting a user to select the correct one of the duplicate files; and

removing all incorrect ones of the duplicate files

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from the path sequence of the environment variable.

10. A computer program product in a computer readable  
media for use in a data processing system for correcting  
5 a path sequence of an environment variable in the data  
processing system, the computer program product  
comprising:

first instructions for monitoring the data  
processing system for a change effecting the environment  
10 variable; and

second instructions, responsive to detection of the  
change effecting the environment variable, for altering  
the environment variable to ensure that a proper file is  
found and used when selected by one of a user and a  
15 running application program.

11. The computer program product as recited in claim 10,  
wherein the change is a change effecting the path  
sequence of the environment variable.

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12. The computer program product as recited in claim 10,  
wherein the change is a deletion of a directory from the  
data processing system.

25 13. The computer program product as recited in claim 10,  
wherein the change is the installation of a software  
application onto the data processing system.

14. The computer program product as recited in claim 10,  
30 wherein the change is the modification of the contents of  
the environment variable.

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15. The computer program product as recited in claim 10, wherein the step of altering the environment variable comprises removing references to all but one of duplicate files in the path sequence of the environment variable.

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16. The computer program product as recited in claim 15, wherein the all but one duplicate file is selected by a user.

10 17. A system for correcting a path sequence of an environment variable in a data processing system, the system comprising:

first means for monitoring the data processing system for a change effecting the environment variable;

15 and

second means, responsive to detection of the change effecting the environment variable, for altering the environment variable to ensure that a proper file is found and used when selected by one of a user and a running application program.

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18. The system as recited in claim 17, wherein the change is a change effecting the path sequence of the environment variable.

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19. The system as recited in claim 17, wherein the change is a deletion of a directory from the data processing system.

30 20. The system as recited in claim 17, wherein the change is the installation of a software application onto the data processing system.

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21. The system as recited in claim 17, wherein the change is the modification of the contents of the environment variable.

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22. The system as recited in claim 17, wherein the step of altering the environment variable comprises removing references to all but one of duplicate files in the path sequence of the environment variable.

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23. The system as recited in claim 22, wherein the all but one duplicate file is selected by a user.

24. A method for managing environment variables in a data processing system, comprising:

15 automatically invoking an environment variable manager whenever at least one of the following events occur a) a directory is deleted; b) a product is installed on the data processing system; c) a product is  
20 uninstalled on the data processing system; and d) a path sequence of a given environment variable is manually modified by a user;

determining, by the environment variable manager, if the occurring event causes a modification to an affected  
25 path sequence of any environment variable; and

enabling at least one of a) a correction to the affected path sequence and b) a display to the user of an interface for informing the user about a need for a correction of the affected path sequence.

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25. A method for managing environment variables in a data processing system, comprising:

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automatically invoking an environment variable manager whenever a path sequence for an environment variable is modified;

determining, by the environment variable manager, if  
5 duplicate files exist in the path sequence of the environment variable; and

enabling a display of each environment variable determined to have duplicate files in the path sequence to a user for correction.

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26. A method for managing environment variables in a data processing system, comprising:

determining if a directory, within a path sequence of any environment variable, is manually deleted by a  
15 user; and

enabling at least one of the following a) an automatic deletion of the directory from the path sequence of the environment variable; and b) a display of an interface to inform the user to delete the directory  
20 from the path sequence of any affected environment variables.

27. A data processing system having means for managing environment variables, comprising:

25 means for automatically invoking an environment variable manager whenever at least one of the following events occur a) a directory is deleted; b) a product is installed on the data processing system; c) a product is uninstalled on the data processing system; and d) a path  
30 sequence of a given environment variable is manually modified by a user;

means for determining, by the environment variable

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manager, if the occurring event causes a modification to an affected path sequence of any environment variable; and

means for enabling at least one of a) a correction  
5 to the affected path sequence and b) a display to the user of an interface for informing the user about a need for a correction of the affected path sequence.

28. A data processing system having means for managing  
10 environment variables, comprising:

means for automatically invoking an environment variable manager whenever a path sequence for an environment variable is modified;

means for determining, by the environment variable  
15 manager, if duplicate files exist in the path sequence of the environment variable; and

means for enabling a display of each environment variable determined to have duplicate files in the path sequence to a user for correction.

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29. A data processing system having means for managing environment variables in a data processing system, comprising:

means for determining if a directory, within a path  
25 sequence of any environment variable is manually deleted by a user; and

means for enabling at least one of the following a) an automatic deletion of the directory from the path sequence of the environment variable; and b) a display of  
30 an interface to inform the user to delete the directory from the path sequence of any affected environment variables.

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30. A computer program on a computer readable medium having program code means for managing environment variables in a data processing system, comprising:

5 instruction means for automatically invoking an environment variable manager whenever at least one of the following events occur a) a directory is deleted; b) a product is installed on the data processing system; c) a product is uninstalled on the data processing system; and  
10 d) a path sequence of a given environment variable is manually modified by a user;

instruction means for determining, by the environment variable manager, if the occurring event causes a modification to an affected path sequence of any  
15 environment variable; and

instruction means for enabling at least one of a) a correction to the affected path sequence and b) a display to the user of an interface for informing the user about a need for correction of the affected path sequence.  
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31. A computer program on a computer readable medium having program code means for managing environment variables in a data processing system, comprising:

instruction means for automatically invoking an environment variable manager whenever a path sequence for  
25 an environment variable is modified;

instruction means for determining, by the environment variable manager, if duplicate files exist in the path sequence of the environment variable; and  
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instruction means for enabling a display of each environment variable determined to have duplicate files in the path sequence to a user for correction.

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32. A computer program on a computer readable medium having program code means for managing environment variables in a data processing system, comprising:

- 5 instruction means for determining if a directory, within a path sequence of any environment variable, is manually deleted by a user; and

- instruction means for enabling at least one of the following a) an automatic deletion of the directory from  
10 the path sequence of the environment variable; and b) a display of an interface to inform the user to delete the directory from the path sequence of any affected environment variables.

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